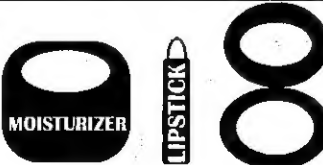


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Pillsbury to shut down local plant, three others

A long-time employer in Hoopeston will shut its doors next spring, leaving more than 230 employees jobless.

Employees of the Hoopeston Pillsbury plant, plus employees in plants in Ripon, Wis., Beaver Dam, Wis., and LeSueur, Minn., will be out of work when an agreement between Pillsbury and Seneca Foods Corporation of Pittsford, N.Y., takes effect.

According to a press release issued by Pillsbury, Seneca will become the primary processor of the Green Giant line of canned vegetables. Pillsbury will retain ownership of the brand, but Seneca will assume responsibility for Green Giant processing and related inventory, reducing Pillsbury's net working capital by \$160 million.

Glen Crawford, Pillsbury vice president, operations, pizza division, said that while the news is not good, employees will at least have time to plan ahead. "The good news is this is not immediate," he said. "People will have time to think through and plan their changes."

A company representative will be at the Hoopeston plant three days each week for the next several months to help evaluate employees' skills and help with job assessment and placement.

"We're going to go to work now to help people through this transition," Crawford said.

Employees were surprised - but not shocked - by news of the closing.

Larry Rhodes of Danville, who has worked at the plant for 16 years, called the decision

"something I knew was going to happen eventually. Every year since I've been here, (employees) said it was going to happen. It didn't come as a surprise to me."

Allan Baker of Hoopeston, a four-year employee and member of the union bargaining committee, said he felt when negotiations were going on earlier this year that "we'd never see another contract with Pillsbury, and it came true."

While Baker believes the closure is not related to the contract negotiations, he said company officials were probably planning the sale at that time.

Greg Searcy, 34, of Attica, Ind., along with Baker and Rhodes, said the closing will be more difficult on older employees.

"There are guys who've been here since they were 13, 14 years old," Searcy said. "They don't know anything else. I just think it's a shame."

Searcy said employees expressed "a lot of different mixed emotions" Thursday, ranging from "anger, worry, helplessness, lost," he said. "People are just wondering what they're going to do from here."

The closing will affect not only employees, but the entire town.

"They're taking the backbone out of Hoopeston," Baker said, adding the plant dates back to the 1870s, when it was the Hoopeston Canning Co.





Despite the news, employees tried to remain optimistic. Baker said the building might be attractive. See **PILLSBURY** on other side

**'They're taking the backbone
 out of Hoopeston.'**

Allan Baker, 4-year employee

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Lunch Menus

Hoopeston Area grade schools

Dec. 12: Chicken patty/bun, tator tots, cheese, pears, milk.

Dec. 13: Hot dog/bun, baked beans, slaw, peaches, milk.

Dec. 14: CHRISTMAS DINNER - Turkey & noodles, potatoes, green beans, bread, butter, cake, fruit cocktail, milk.

Dec. 15: Hamburger/bun, French fries, cheese, pickles, pineapple, milk.

Hoopeston Area Jr./Sr. High

Dec. 12: Chicken patty/bun or tuna salad/bun, tator tots, cheese, pears, milk.

Dec. 13: Hot dog/bun or sub sandwich/bun (bologna, spiced luncheon, cheese, baked beans, slaw, peaches, milk.

Dec. 14: CHRISTMAS DINNER - Turkey & noodles or Z rib/bun, potatoes, green beans, bread, butter, cake, fruit cocktail, milk.

Dec. 15: Hamburger/bun or hot dog/bun, French fries, cheese, pickles, pineapple, milk.

Dec. 16: Fish nuggets or ground beef BBQ/bun, corn, salad, bread, butter, applesauce, milk.

Pillsbury continued from other side

tive to another company. "Maybe somebody else might want to come in to something like this," he said.

Civic officials, too, are trying to remain optimistic. "It's disheartening," said Mayor Bob Ault, adding the news comes on the heels of downsizing by two other companies in Hoopeston, GTE and FMC.

Ault said he was not forewarned about the closure, even though he met with company officials and residents of the South Gate subdivision Tuesday.

Residents of the development, on Hoopeston's southeast side, requested the meeting to discuss possible solutions to the odor problem caused by Pillsbury spraying bean processing water in fields surrounding the subdivision.

Chamber of Commerce president Rod Burkett called the decision "negative news," but said the impact won't be felt for some time.

The decision also provides a lesson for the community, Burkett said. "I think this just further goes to show we need as much diversity in our economic development as possible," he said.

In cities with a dominating industry, "how they go, goes the local community. Not that you'd ever turn down a cannery that might want to go in there, but in future planning, we need to be as diverse as possible."

Police News

The Hoopeston Fire Department was called at 5:33 a.m. Thursday to a car fire at 516 E. McCracken. No injuries were reported.

Dianne Coon, 507 W. Maple, reported Thursday that someone tried to enter her garage, damaging the door.

A girl's Huffy bicycle was found at 528 S. Second Ave. The owner may identify and claim it at the police station.

In the hospital

Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital
Dec. 7, 1994

Admitted: Jennifer Shearer, Hoopeston; one other person, name withheld.

Discharged: John Ingram, Milford

Weather

Forty percent chance of rain or freezing rain this morning, then clearing. High in the upper 30s. Tonight, clear. Low in the upper 20s. Saturday and Sunday, cloudy. Highs near 34, lows near 27.

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